



Cliff Sligar - *Public Service*

Born in Wheeling on January 27, 1933, Cliff Sligar was best known for his committed service to the City of Wheeling as its fire chief, where he spent 24 years in that role. His 52-year public service career started with the U.S. Army in Germany during the Korean War (1953-55). On June 24, 1955, he achieved his lifelong dream and joined the Wheeling Fire Department.

In May 1971, while still a Captain at WFD, Sligar was invited to join some of the top commanding officers in the country at NASA's Manned Space Center in Houston, Texas, where they worked to develop an advanced support breathing apparatus for firefighters. This was a significant advancement in firefighting while improving the personal safety of the individual firefighter.

Cliff was appointed Fire Chief on October 1, 1971. During his tenure, in the mid-1970s, he worked closely with local hospitals, physicians, and nurses to train and certify firefighters as Mobile Intensive Care Paramedics and West Virginia state-certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).

He played a key role in developing the department's EMT/paramedic program while also updating tactics and strategies for approaching various fire and emergency situations.

His attention to continuing education and further funding of the Wheeling Fire Department EMS program continues the department's tradition of service decades after his retirement.

In 1988, he pushed the City of Wheeling to develop a county-wide 911 center. Since then, 911 has saved thousands of lives thanks to the initial push and implementation during his tenure.

Chief Sligar was a visionary, a problem solver, an early adopter, an agent of change, a disruptor, and an excellent manager of human and physical resources. Sligar was met with several challenging emergencies, and his leadership was commended many times for being "the person in charge" of many notable safety events in Wheeling.

In January 1988, an oil spill in the Ohio River contaminated the city's water supply. During that event, Cliff came up with the idea and was clever enough to use the former North Wheeling Railroad bridge to construct a water supply line from Martins Ferry, Ohio, to supply fresh well water to Wheeling – all having the public's safety in mind. A letter to Sligar from then City Manager Mike Nau said in part, "I want to take a moment to tell you how impressed I was with your handling of the recent water crisis. I was dependent upon you throughout this crisis, and you certainly maintained my confidence level in dealing with this situation. I have heard many times how fortunate the City of Wheeling is to have such a compatible and qualified individual protecting the public safety of our citizens. I certainly owe you a debt of gratitude."

Sligar's life of public service continued after retiring from the Wheeling Fire Department in 1995 – where he had spent a total of 40 years. He went on to develop and launch the Belmont County, Ohio, 911 Center in 1997 and served as its first director until his retirement in June 2007.

He also served Wheeling City Council's fourth ward for two elected terms from 1996-2004.

Honored at the 2019 Wheeling State of the City Address, Sligar was praised by Mayor Glenn Elliott, who said, "For 40 years, including 24 as chief, Cliff came to work at the Wheeling Fire Department to keep us safe. As chief, he was instrumental in adding Emergency Medical Services to the fire department. Under his leadership, the department's investigation division was launched in 1986, and the police and fire departments combined their communication systems in 1988."

Cliff Sligar died on March 17, 2021, at age 88, and is survived by his wife Sherry, adult sons Bill (Shelley) Sligar and Cliff Sligar, and nephew Stephen Himrod.

Cliff will be remembered first and foremost as a firefighter who cared deeply for his department and city. "The Intelligencer" newspaper of Wheeling noted after his passing, "If there was one thing everyone knew about Cliff Sligar, he wanted to make his home city of Wheeling a better place."